

National Park Service  
Performance Management System

## The Role and Function of NPS Goal Groups

### NPS Goal Groups

The National Park Service (NPS) Goal Groups are the backbone of improving our ability to manage by implementing performance management throughout the NPS. Goal Groups were established in 1999 to coordinate NPS performance goal setting and achievement. Five Goal Groups were organized along subject matter lines similar to the NPS Strategic Plan.

Goal Group I – Natural Resources

Goal Group I – Cultural Resources

Goal Group II – Visitors

Goal Group III – External Partnerships

Goal Group IV – Organizational Effectiveness

**(Note:** Performance management in this document refers solely to the results-oriented, goal-driven management system prescribed by GPRA, and not to the way the term is traditionally used in personnel management.)

### Goal Group Organization:

Goal Groups will be co-chaired by a Regional Director(s) and an Associate Director(s). Each Goal Group will also include at least one member of the NPS Performance Management Council, a SES Superintendent, park representatives (a small park superintendent and a large park superintendent), a Regional Performance Management Coordinator, and a staff member of the Office of Strategic Planning, and technical experts as appropriate. Total number of Goal Group members at discretion of Goal Group chairs. Servicewide Goal Contacts provide technical advice, as does WASO Office of Strategic Planning. When determining group membership, the following should be considered:

- Choose a diversity of backgrounds, experience and perspectives
- Choose a diversity of geographic representation from parks
- Consider including some or all of the Servicewide Goal Contacts as team members or advisors
- Include participants from different levels/places in the organization

### Role of NPS Goal Groups

Goal Groups are responsible for establishing, reviewing, and if needed, adjusting goals in each respective goal category. Each Goal Group, working with its specific goals, will ensure the targets established each year as part of the budget formulation process move this organization towards fulfilling its strategic plan goals, that the targets are met, or when they are not met, determining what remedial action is taken. The Goal Groups work closely with the offices and people instrumental in NPS performance management as well and provide supporting documentation for goals (in conjunction with Servicewide Goal Coordinators). Goal Group NLC representative will negotiate at the NLC level for redistribution of funds when needed to achieve highest priority goals (may be dictated by Departmental or Presidential initiatives).

In these roles the Goal Groups interface with other NPS entities as follows:

Servicewide Goal Contacts (SGC):

The SGCs are the designated subject matter expert for each of the Servicewide strategic plan goals. SGCs may be members of the Goal Group or advisors to the group. Goal Groups need to work closely with SGCs to monitor goal achievement, prepare technical guidance for goals, develop strategies to achieve goals, determine key external factors affecting goals, set targets for strategic plan updates, as well as providing information for NPS Annual Performance Plans and Annual Performance Reports.

Regional Performance Management Coordinators (RPMC):

One RPMC will be a member of each Goal Group and will provide advice to the group on park level issues related to goals.

NPS Performance Management Council (PMC):

Each Goal Group will provide a summary of activities to the Office of Strategic Planning and for each PMC meeting (generally two per FY). Proposals from Goal Groups that require NLC approval must go through the PMC for consensus prior to consideration by the NLC. The PMC will evaluate cross-cutting issues between Goal Groups to provide guidance on implementation issues.

The Directorate:

At least two members of the NLC will be members of each Goal Group. The Goal Groups may need to work through the NLC to negotiate the appropriate numerical targets for the servicewide set of goals if it becomes apparent not all goals can be met with available funding and agency priorities. Information developed by Goal Groups will be used by the NLC to make and communicate management decisions and allocate resources. NLC members make management decisions based on the servicewide goals and constantly reinforce that the National Park Service is using performance management/GPRA, and will continue to use performance management, to manage the National Park Service. Goal Groups will work with any program manager, Associate, or Regional Director involved in the development and achievement of its goals. Goal Groups work closely with the Office of Strategic Planning to monitor reporting and submission due dates.

**Function of NPS Goal Groups:**

To carry out their roles, each NPS Goal Group performs the following functions (in coordination with Servicewide Goal Contacts):

1. Determine the adequacy of NPS goals (too many – goals that are not useful, too few – mission of the NPS not adequately covered)
2. Develop Servicewide strategic goals for NLC ratification (for 2000 strategic plan – FYs 01-05: for 2003 strategic plan – FYs 04-08: for 2006 strategic plan – FYs 07-11).
3. Develop goal targets for goals
4. Determine strategies to accomplish goals
5. Identify key external factors that influence goal accomplishment
6. Ensure baselines are current

7. Ensure data are valid and of high quality
8. Develop validation/verification methods for each goal
9. Develop and implement program evaluations for goal related programs
10. Identify resource assessment methods/tools to collect data (resource condition)
11. Ensure Technical Guidance is high quality and up to date
12. Ensure budget and budget priorities are linked to strategic goals
13. Improve links between NPS strategic goals and operations
14. Track goal accomplishment
15. Determine what to do to remedy identified deficiencies related to achieving goals
16. Ensure that when goals are not met there is an understanding of why they were not met and what will be done in future to meet them
17. Provide additional information when need is identified (i.e. OMB document A-11)

See **Discussion of the Group's Functions** below for more detailed explanations.

Conceptually, the role of the Goal Group can be summarized as:

- **Oversight/coordination/facilitation/inspiration/validation/decide/recommend/steering committee and catalyst to get things done!**

#### **Critical Time Periods:**

- Strategic Plans: By law, strategic plans are updated every three years and extended to cover five years (the 1997 Strategic Plan, covering FY 1998 – 2002, was updated in 2000 and extended to cover FY 2001-2005). This is a process that takes over two years to accomplish for each cycle.
- Annual Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (APP/APR): By law, agencies prepare and APP/APR with the current FY operating plan goals, the budget FY planned goals, and reports on goal achievement for at least three past fiscal years. The majority of the information for the APP/ARP is gathered and reported in the first quarter of each fiscal year with the APP/APR being finalized in January of each year.
- Performance Management Data System (PMDS) reporting: Data in the PMDS must be monitored throughout the year for quality and consistency. However, November and December of each year are critical review times for data quality. Most of the data review is done by Servicewide and Regional Goal Contacts and the Regional Performance Management Coordinators.

#### **Supporting Materials for NPS Goal Groups**

#### **Discussion of the Group's Functions, item by item:**

1. Develop 2003 strategic goals for NLC ratification.
  - Draft goals due December 2001
  - Public input on draft goals (Jan 2002)
  - Final Draft goals due Jan 2002

- NLC approval of final draft goals, March 2002, DOI, OMB, and Congressional review, Final Draft goals posted for Park/program use
  - Final targets set Jan 2003, NLC, DOI, OMC approval of final goals
  - Plan published April 2003
  - Gather information
    - Evaluate progress on existing goals
      - 2001 Annual Performance Report, 2003 Annual Performance Plan  
2000 Annual Performance Report, 2002 Annual Performance Plan  
1999 Annual Performance Report, 2001 Annual Performance Plan,  
1998 Annual Performance Report, 2000 Annual Performance Plan
      - Summer-Fall 2001: Get briefings from goal contacts (the people who wrote the goals) Servicewide Goal Contacts review and assess the NPS strategic plan targets, the accuracy of baselines, etc., and compare the data with the PMDS data as it is rolled up from all parks. Objective: to see if the rollup data corresponds with the strategic plan targets, etc. If the data does not agree, use input from the goal contacts to initiate corrections.
      - Identify outside experts to assist the goal group in our activities
      - Central repository for information-Goal Group Point of Contacts will keep track of agenda from meeting to meeting, track the role and function items for the group, and, serve as the formal point of contact for the goal group.
      - Look at current goals
        - Balance
        - Full coverage
        - Too (how) many
        - Consider using focus groups to explore where we should change existing goals, etc.
    - Analyze information
2. Develop Goal Targets
    - Goal Contact Input- 2001
    - Input from other groups solicited
  3. Determine strategies to accomplish goals
    - Servicewide Goal Contacts,
    - Do at same time as developing the goals-October 2001 to May 2002; work on developing and implementing a strategy for goal formulation (for the 2003 strategic plan) that will involve goal contacts at the national and regional level.
  4. Identify Key External Factors
    - Monitor environment
    - Think Tank
    - Present at meeting to assess kind, type, scope & impact on goal accomplishment and determine adjustments needed.
  5. Ensure baselines are accurate-Goal Contacts present their findings to Goal Group.
    - Goal contacts in WASO and regions consult on this
    - Evaluate each baseline for each goal

- Identify those where baseline is verifiably current/accurate
  - Identify where problem goals/baselines exist:
    - Identify the problem
    - Identify the range of alternative solutions with recommendations
      - Present to the goal group for decision and/or follow up action
6. Ensure data are valid
    - Goal contacts in WASO and regions-The Goal Group needs further discussion on how best to approach this.
    - Same as # 5 above
  7. Develop and implement Program Evaluations for goals
  8. Ensure Technical Guidance is high quality and user friendly.
    - WASO and Regional goal contacts and Regional Performance Management Coordinators review and recommend revision to the Office of Strategic Planning- Report on the problems/solutions that have been reported to date concerning the technical guidance.
  9. Ensure budget and budget priorities are linked to strategic goals
    - Accountability
      - Make sure we graphically show the links between goals and budget
  10. Improve links between strategic goals and operations
    - Use program evaluation information to identify and advertise success
    - Develop and administer award for outstanding results?
    - Show results linked to budget and goals
    - Ensure accountability. Includes standards and best practices that reinforce this linkage.

Goal Groups determine the strategies, key external factors and data status for the goals within their assigned goal category .These will become key elements of each NPS Strategic Plan.

- Strategies: The strategies must reflect both existing practices and consider new ones (that can reasonably be accomplished). Strategies should include both servicewide approaches and park and program level ones.
- Key External Factors: Key external factors are forces entirely outside the NPS control which may severely impact our ability to accomplish goals.
- Data Status: Data status includes both ensuring that baselines are current and complete and that quantitative information is high quality.

### **Role in APP/APR Preparation:**

#### **In coordination with Servicewide Goal Contacts:**

Review and provide updated information for goals (also see OMB and DOI annual guidance):

Goal Description: Update the **description** of the goals, how the goals benefit the public-environment-etc. When do we expect to fully accomplish this goal – when will we reach the desired condition.

Strategies: Provide a descriptive set of strategies for attaining the goals.

Data Verification and Validation: How are we planning to verify that the data for **all** goals are correct? This is of special concern to the Inspector General's Office. We need to demonstrate that we are managing the credibility of the data.

What was the past Fiscal Year actual performance? If goals did not meet their projections, we **must have a follow-up explanation as to why the goal was not met**. As you know, our past response for many of those goals was that we would need to study the results. Well, we've had time to study them. Now we need to explain our findings. If any of your goals do not meet the projections for a Fiscal Year, be prepared to provide a more useful explanation than the need to study the results. An explanation of what we are going to do about our failure to meet our own projections is required by GPRA.

For all goals that were exceeded or not met, do out-year goal targets need to be adjusted up or down. Explain why or why not.

Servicewide Goal Contacts should be reviewing the data in PMDS to look for obvious problems and work with the Regional Performance Management Coordinators and parks to determine where the performance shortfalls are and why they occurred. Each Fiscal Year we need to know where parks set targets they did not reach.

The STRATEGIC ISSUES FACING THE MISSION OF NPS need to be updated yearly. They need to include any/all issues raised by the IG, GAO, and Congress regarding management issues/problems. If you believe there to be additional issues that should be mentioned, include those also. In addition to identifying the issues, please indicate what we have done to resolve them to date and what we plan to do to resolve them.

Special Funding Initiatives: If you have goals that pertain to special funding initiatives, we will be asking you to break out the initiative dollars by goal and to explain how the additional dollars affect goal results or increase goal targets.

PMDS Reporting: If you or your staff is responsible for getting performance/dollar data into PMDS (2000, 2001, and 2002), please place the highest priority on this (the servicewide due date was October 31, 2000).

#### Technical Guidance Updates

Proposed updates for the Technical Guidance are due annually (generally draft updates in June and final updates in August)